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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 008303

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN DEMOCRATIC REFORM STATUS REPORT: THIRD QUARTER 2005

REF: A. STATE 152818

[1B](#). AMMAN 7979

[1C](#). AMMAN 4125

[1D](#). AMMAN 5232

Classified By: CDA DANIEL RUBINSTEIN FOR REASONS 1.4 (b and d)

[¶11. \(C\) Summary](#). Ref A contained the democracy strategy for Jordan, which identified freedom of the press, protection of women, and judicial reform as priorities. Progress on each of these points is assessed below. The "desired outcome" provided by ref A leads each section.

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FREEDOM OF THE PRESS  
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[¶12. \(C\) DESIRED OUTCOME](#): The GOJ should eliminate criminal penalties under the press law, cease to harass and detain journalists, and grant licenses to at least one private radio station and one TV station to broadcast on all subjects.

[¶13. \(C\) Press Laws](#): The recommendations of the royal commission for the National Agenda, led by Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Muasher (ref B), will include a measure on press and publications, and another on the right of journalists to access information. These changes would require acts of Parliament. In conversations with Post, Muasher recognized that liberalizing legislation was only a first step; of more importance will be implementing the reforms.

[¶14. \(SBU\) Radio Broadcast Licenses](#): No new stations were licensed during the quarter. Any new station must receive a license from the Audio/Visual Commission (AVC), and then authorization from the Cabinet before transmitting. All of the current FM stations broadcast entertainment/music and abstain from political reports. A different (and more expensive) class of license must be obtained for news reporting. The AVC is reviewing applications for small, university-based radio stations; one application is from Al-Hussein University in Ma'an in the south, supported by the British Council, and another is from Yarmouk University in Irbid in the north, supported by Western Kentucky University, State, and USAID. UNESCO is also reportedly trying to acquire a license to broadcast in Madaba, southwest of Amman.

[¶15. \(C\) TV Broadcast Licenses](#): No new stations were licensed during the quarter, and none of the previously approved stations have begun broadcasting yet. The terrestrial station belonging to the owner of Al-Ghad newspaper, a centrist Arabic daily, will begin broadcasting in March 2006, according to the AVC. Two current private TV stations include a business channel and a real-estate channel. Post is looking into reports that a second applicant for a new TV license has faced difficulties with the security services. Seven functioning satellite TV stations continue to operate in Jordan's Free Media Zone (FMZ). Several of the stations operating out of the FMZ are facing legal problems over copyright infringement issues, not freedom of the press issues.

[¶16. \(SBU\) Press Association](#): In September, the National Agenda commission recommended the repeal of laws that require journalists to join the Jordan Press Association (JPA). The GOJ believes that allowing journalists to opt out of JPA membership will free them from the political agenda of the association's leadership, who oppose most of the government's reform agenda as well as normalization with Israel. This will be reported in detail SEPTEL.

[¶17. \(SBU\) Technical Assistance](#): USAID is due to award a new technical assistance contract in November 2005 to support free and independent media in Jordan. The contract program will improve university journalism curricula, strengthen the skills of practicing journalists, assist in liberalizing legislation, and improve the business development skills of mass media. The overall goal is to professionalize and de-politicize the media. DRL and ECA also support programs in this area, and MEPI has a regional media support program that includes Jordan.

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PROTECTION OF WOMEN  
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¶18. (C) DESIRED OUTCOME: The GOJ should support the enforcement of legal codes protecting women and civil society organizations should report a 25 percent increase in the number of honor crimes prosecuted over the next year.

¶19. (U) Honor crimes that are reported are prosecuted. The concerns of women's and human rights activists are focused on the fact that sentences handed down to perpetrators of these killings are often very short, thanks to a loophole provide by Article 98 of the Jordanian penal code. The chief prosecutor of the criminal court system appeals all sentences that are shorter than those recommended by his prosecutors. In the third quarter, the chief prosecutor appealed at least one short sentence; a ruling on the appeal is still pending. The Family Protection unit of the Public Security Directorate is increasing public awareness of domestic violence and is offering greater services to its victims, including counseling for families and victims, and monitoring of families in high-risk situations (ref D).

¶10. (U) A women's shelter designed to house and help potential victims of honor crimes live independently still has not opened. According to NGO and GOJ sources, the construction of the shelter is complete, but administrative questions linger. The shelter is part of the GOJ's Family Protection Project, under the patronage of Queen Rania.

¶11. (U) Freedom House is undertaking an awareness campaign, sponsored by MEPI, to increase awareness of violence against women, including conducting rural workshops and holding public performances of an interactive play on this subject.

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JUDICIAL REFORM  
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¶12. (C) DESIRED OUTCOME: The GOJ should adopt and implement the new judicial code of conduct.

¶13. (U) There are two USAID-sponsored judicial reform programs in Jordan. The first, a \$3.5 million project implemented by the American Bar Association (ABA), aims to strengthen judicial independence and integrity, reduce demand on courts through alternative dispute resolution (ADR), upgrading legal education, and enhancing the legal profession. A working group met in August to finalize its report on recommendations to improve judicial accountability and ethics. A Court Employee Ethics Committee is among the accomplishments of the program, as well as a survey on ADR, a legal education conference, and soon, the ABA will be supporting a MEPI sponsored G8 Forum for the Future Conference in Amman on civil society organizations and the rule of law. The project began in May 2004 and is scheduled to conclude in July 2007

¶14. (SBU) USAID's Improved Rule of Law Program, being implemented by DPK Consulting, is a \$7.8 million project running from August 2004 through July 2007. It is working to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), re-design an internal/supply-oriented court system, strengthen the inspection and monitoring capacity, and improve civil society, small grants and media. The Program recently awarded a sub-contract to a local firm in order to document court processes and procedures, and to standardize the forms used by the MOJ and courts. Other recent activities include assisting the MOJ to implement its reform strategy, empowering women judges, and establishing baseline date through surveys of judges, lawyers, litigants, court users, and the public. Based on the results of the surveys, the MOJ will be examining two areas of concern: pressure exerted on judges, and discrimination in the courts.

¶15. (SBU) The Rule of Law Program authored a report on judicial independence and developed a strategic planning document during the quarter titled "Advancing the Independence of the Jordanian Judiciary". A technical team meeting was held in August to discuss progress made on the automation of Amman's First Instance Court, the Notary Public Department, and the Court of Appeal.

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